

# Preventing Violence in the Workplace: Reference Packet for Agencies

## Section I. Introduction

Violence in the workplace can have devastating effects on the productivity of agencies and on the quality of life of employees. The purpose of this document is to provide state agencies with guidelines to help reduce workplace violence hazards, both at an organization and individual level. A general outline of issues is given. Please adapt this document and its ideas to fit the needs of your agency.

## Workplace Violence Defined

Workplace violence is defined as real or perceived threats or acts of physical or verbal violence committed in the workplace or as a result of a workplace relationship.

Perpetrators of violence may include employees, former employees, family members of employees, independent contractors, consultants, vendors, and customers.

## Forms of Workplace Violence

**Verbal** - involves oral threats toward another person or property. Examples of verbal violence include the use of vulgar or profane language, disparaging or derogatory comments or slurs, offensive sexual flirtations, verbal intimidation, exaggerated criticism, and name calling.

**Visual** - includes threatening or offensive gestures, drawings, posters, and publications.

**Written** - includes threatening notes or letters, and pornographic literature

**Physical** - includes any physical assault such as hitting, pushing, kicking, holding, impeding or blocking the movement of another person, and/or any act that could cause physical harm to a person or property.

## Types of Threats

**Direct Threats** - The individual making the threat communicates what is going to happen, e.g., "I'm going to hurt you." Follow agency procedures in notifying authorities.

**Conditional Threats** - The person making the threat conditions violence on a specific action, e. g., "If you report this meeting, I'll get even with you." You must always assume that this type of threat is legitimate, and follow agency procedures in notifying authorities.

**Veiled Threats** - The person making the threat uses gestures and/or words to get the message across. Body language can be just as intimidating as a direct or conditional threat, e.g., "You haven't heard the last of this." Follow agency procedures in notifying authorities.

## Reasons for Establishing a Preventing Workplace Violence Program

\* Businesses and government agencies are beginning to realize the high cost of just one violent incident. These costs can include medical and psychiatric care as well as potential liability suits, lost business and productivity, repairs and clean-up, higher insurance rates, consultants' fees, increased security measures and--most important of all--the death or injury of valued employees and coworkers.

- \* There is increased unrest in tax payer/protesters in the State.
- \* Threats and other violent, abusive behaviors are no longer being tolerated in the workplace.
- \* Executives, professionals, and administrative personnel are no longer immune to acts of violence in the workplace.
- \* Layoffs, increased workload, having to do more with less, and other unpopular changes in the work environment have been associated with increased risk for violence.

#### Preventing Violence in the Workplace

- \* Recent reports and surveys suggest that workplace violence impacts large numbers of employers and employees.
- \* It is the right thing to do. Employers have both a moral and legal obligation to provide a safe workplace for their employees, clients, and visitors.

### **Legal Obligations and Duties of Employers**

The duty of an employer to provide a reasonably safe workplace may arise from a variety of federal or state statutes, regulations, or judicial decisions. The following highlights provide a foundation for the legal audit of your current agency policies and practices for reducing workplace violence.

- \* Compliance with the Montana Safety Act and the Montana Safety Culture Act may contribute positively to reduction of the risk of workplace violence.
- \* Many state courts have ruled that an employer is liable for the dangerous acts of employees if such harm was foreseeable. The employer must use reasonable care in hiring, training, supervising and retaining employees.
- \* Case law in some jurisdictions suggests that the employer may be liable for the negligent acts of independent contractors, where such contractors are incompetent, negligently selected, or engaged in abnormally dangerous activities.
- \* Under both federal and state statutes, the employer may be liable for failure to intervene in situations of harassment of employees by supervisors or management, and in situations involving coworkers where the employer was aware of the harassment.
- \* The employer may be liable for the act of an employee who is intoxicated or otherwise a risk to others, if the employer exercises control over the employee and is negligent in exercising that control.
- \* Employers are expected to use reasonable security precautions and other measures to minimize the risk of foreseeable criminal intrusion (based upon the prior experience of the employer, its location in a dangerous area, or industry victimization base rates).
- \* Employers should be cautious about reducing the level of security because of financial pressures. To avoid or reduce liability the employer should first assess whether the level of security risk justifies reducing security measures.

# **Preventing Violence in the Workplace**

## **Section 2: Preventing Workplace Violence Program**

### **Preventing Workplace Violence Program**

A prevention program has three important steps:

1. Pre-incident Violence Prevention and Preparation
2. Addressing Violent or Threatening Incidents
3. Managing the Aftermath of the Incident

### **1. Pre-incident Violence Prevention and Preparation**

#### **Take Advantage of Community Resources**

There are many programs and resources in the community that can help you develop your workplace violence plans. Some examples follow.

- \* Invite local police into your agency to promote good relations and to help them become more familiar with your facility. The police can explain what actions they typically take during incidents involving threats and violence. Such visits can help your agency work well with police when incidents do occur.

- \* Use law enforcement and security experts to educate employees on how to prevent violence in the workplace. Such experts can provide crime prevention information, conduct building security inspections, and teach employees how to avoid being a victim.

- \* Consider utilizing local associations and community organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, security organizations and law enforcement groups, as a resource in order to stay abreast of crime trends and prevention techniques. Communicate to your employees those issues and trends which pose a significant threat.

- \* Vocational Resources, Inc., the state's Employee Assistance Program operators are available for specialized consulting in workplace violence issues. Call the local office for assistance or (800) 833-3031.

#### **Institute and Review Security Procedures**

Periodic review of security policies and procedures will help minimize your agency's vulnerability to violence and other forms of crime.

- \* Conduct security surveys at scheduled intervals to help determine whether modifications should be made. Five examples of improvements that might be considered during a security survey are:

- 1) Improving lighting in and around the place of work (including parking lots).
- 2) Arranging escorts for employees who are concerned about walking to and from the parking lot.
- 3) Having reception areas that can be locked to prevent outsiders from going into the offices when no receptionist is on duty.
- 4) When appropriate, having more than one employee on the premises.
- 5) Making high-risk areas visible to more people.

- \* Use, maintain, and regularly review appropriate physical security measures, such as electronic access control systems, silent alarms, metal detectors, and video cameras in a manner consistent with applicable state and federal laws.

- \* Limit former employees' access to the workplace as appropriate.
- \* Develop policies regarding visitor access within facilities. For example, if warranted, require visitors to sign in and out at reception, wear an identification badge while on the business premises, and/or be escorted.

### **Form a Crisis Management Team and Prepare a Crisis Plan**

It is important to form a crisis management team whose primary responsibility is to develop a plan of action to resolve threats or acts of violence. The plan might include:

- Composition on crisis management team
- Providing guidance concerning how agency will interact with local authorities, state officials, and others during and after the crisis
- Providing guidance developed in concert with local authorities for collecting and preserving evidence, including interviews of involved parties
- Monitoring facilities for security
- Monitoring potentially violence situations
- Collecting and monitoring incident reports
- Managing of communications regarding an incident, for example, media relations and internal communications
- Managing the release of sensitive information where appropriate
- Assigning responsibilities for contacting the families of victims
- Managing clean up and repairs
- Making decisions about returning to work
- Notifying customers and suppliers about changes in orders
- Providing employees and their families with information about benefits
- Managing operations and trauma care after the crisis.

### **Improve Internal/External Communications**

- \* If appropriate, establish an internal emergency code word or phone number similar to 911.
- \* Place lists of contact persons, crisis management plans, evacuation plans, and building plans where they can be made available to emergency responders. Keep important telephone numbers in several places (including offsite locations), available to all appropriate managers and employees.

### **Establish Ground Rules for Behavior**

- \* Agencies that do not tolerate aggressive interaction or drug abuse lower the risk of workplace violence.
- \* Create and disseminate a clear policy of zero-tolerance for workplace violence, verbal and nonverbal threats, and related actions. Managers, supervisors, co-workers, clients, patients and visitors must be advised of this policy. An example would be: Any person who makes substantial threats, exhibits threatening behavior, or engages in violent acts on State property shall be removed from the premises as quickly as safety permits and shall remain off State premises pending the outcome of an investigation. See Reference Documents: "Preventing Workplace Violence Policy" page 17.

- \* Require employees to report all assaults or threats to a designated person. Keep logbooks and reports of such incidents to help in determining any necessary actions to prevent further occurrences.
- \* Establish a daily work plan for staff to keep a designated contact person informed about the workers' whereabouts throughout the workday. If an employee does not report in at the time agreed upon, the contact person should follow up.
- \* Periodically inspect the workplace and evaluate employee tasks to identify hazards, conditions, operations, and situations that could lead to violence. To find areas requiring further evaluation, the following should be done:
  - a) Identify jobs or locations with the greatest risk of violence as well as processes and procedures that put employees at risk of assault, including how often and when.
  - b) Note high-risk factors such as types of clients, physical risk factors of the building; isolated locations/job activities; lighting problems; areas of easy, unsecured access; and areas with previous security problems.

### **Engineering Controls and Workplace Adaptation.**

Examples follow:

- \* Assess any plans for new construction or physical changes to the facility or workplace to eliminate or reduce security hazards.
- \* Place curved mirrors at hallway intersections or concealed areas.
- \* Provide employee 'safe rooms' for use during emergencies.
- \* Provide client waiting rooms designed to maximize comfort and minimize stress.
- \* Ensure that client conference rooms have two exits.
- \* Arrange furniture to prevent entrapment of employees.
- \* Lock all unused doors to limit access, in accordance with local fire codes.
- \* Install bright, effective lighting indoors and outdoors.
- \* Provide sensitive and timely information to persons waiting in line or waiting rooms. Adopt measures to decrease waiting time.
- \* See Reference Documents: "Warning Signs of Potentially Violent Individuals" page 8 and "Personal Conduct to Minimize Violence" page 9.

### **Provide Training to Employees on Preventing Workplace Violence**

All employees, regardless of their level of risk, should be taught:

- \* Techniques for recognizing the potential for violence. See Reference Document: "Warning Signs of Potentially Violent Individuals" page 8
- \* Procedures, policies and work environment arrangements developed to control the risk to workers. See Reference Document: "Preventing Workplace Violence" Model Policy page 17
- \* Proper use of security hardware
- \* The appropriate response to incidents of violence, including emergency and hostage situations
- \* How to obtain medical assistance and follow-up
- \* Procedures for reporting, investigating and documenting incidents of violence
- \* Field and travel safety See Reference Documents: "Field Safety Considerations" page 12 and "Travel Safety Considerations" page 14.

- \* Cash and property handling procedures
- Training resources (contractors, classes, videos) are available through the Professional Development Center (444-3774). Counseling, referral, and assessment services are available through Vocational Resources Inc.

## **2. Addressing Violent or Threatening Incidents**

Because situations vary so greatly, we have not attempted to give specific recommendations. Each work unit should evaluate its specific situation and train its staff accordingly. Several reference documents are attached to better help you evaluate the situation and train your staff.

- \* Refer to Reference documents: "Warning Signs of Potentially Violent Individuals" page 8, "Personal Conduct to Minimize Violence" page 9, "Weapons in the Workplace" page 10, "Preparation for Appointments, Contacts, and Meetings" page 11, "Field Safety Considerations" page 12 and "Once You Are In the Field" "Travel Tips for Safety" page 14.

- \* Reporting of the incident should be done according to the guidelines set in the work-site policy.

- \* Reporting of serious threats should be made to the police and to General Services (444-3060 or 444-3030) if the work-site is on the Capitol Complex.

## **3. Managing the Aftermath of the Incident**

The Crisis Management Teams should address these issues

### **Evaluate Security After a Threat**

- \* If warranted, provide increased work-site protection when serious threats of violence have been made.
- \* Consider the costs and benefits of providing increased protection to threatened employees. This could include changing their phone numbers, relocating them, loaning them a cellular phone, or providing them with a quick response distress button.

### **Trauma Plan**

After a violent incident, provide information and offer counseling services to employees and their families, which may include:

- \* Providing a debriefing 24 to 72 hours after a serious incident of violence to include all affected employees so that the cause of the violence and expectations can be discussed, a plan of action can be addressed, and those needing further counseling can be identified. Vocational Resources Inc. is available to handle the "Critical Incident Debriefing." Call the local office or (800) 833-3031.
- \* Providing a group debriefing after a serious incident of violence for immediate coworkers in how to communicate with the victim/coworker who is re-entering the job after absence.
- \* Providing ongoing follow-up treatment, as needed.
- \* Report to central location.

## **Reporting Procedures**

Agencies should establish avenues of communication so employees can report the following without fear of reprisal or criticism:

- a) Incidents of threats, harassment, and other aggressive behavior. Inappropriate behavior is often a warning sign of potential hostility or violence.
- b) Conditions where employees are subjected to excessive or unnecessary risk of violence.
- c) Suggestions for reducing risk of violence or improving negative working conditions, such as establishing a telephone hot-line, identifying specific points of contact in the agency for addressing those issues, having a suggestion box or computer bulletin board, or providing an ombudsman.

## **Reporting Threats, Internal & External (From VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY STATEMENT)**

Each incident of violent behavior, whether the incident is committed by an employee, customer, vendor or citizen must be reported to management. Management will assess and investigate the incident and determine the appropriate action. Early reporting is critical for an investigation process.

If you feel you are being threatened:

- If physical harm is imminent, dial 911 immediately and call for assistance.
- Document the details of the incident. Include information, which will identify the person who threatened you, dates and times, direct quotes, and names of any witnesses.
- Save all notes, correspondence or related records received from the individual.
- Report the incident to your supervisor, bureau chief, administrator, safety coordinator, or personnel officer immediately.
- Do not make further contact with the individual without discussing the situation with management.

If you are not personally the victim of threatening behavior, but observe such actions report the incident to management immediately.

Management should report all serious incidents to General Services (444-3060 or 444-3030) if on the Capitol Complex and/or local police.

## **Preventing Violence in the Workplace**

### **Section 3: Reference Documents**

#### **Warning Signs of Potentially Violent Individuals**

There is no exact method to predict when a person will become violent. One or more of these warning signs may be displayed before a person becomes violent but does not necessarily indicate that an individual will become violent. A display of these signs should trigger concern as they are usually exhibited by people experiencing problems.

- \* Irrational beliefs and ideas
- \* Verbal, nonverbal or written threats or intimidation
- \* Fascination with weaponry and/or acts of violence
- \* Expressions of a plan to hurt himself or others
- \* Unreciprocated romantic obsession
- \* Taking up much of supervisor's time with behavior or performance problems.
- \* Fear reaction among coworkers/clients
- \* Drastic change in belief systems
- \* Displays of unwarranted anger
- \* New or increased source of stress at home or work
- \* Inability to take criticism
- \* Feelings of being victimized
- \* Intoxication from alcohol or other substances
- \* Expressions of hopelessness or heightened anxiety
- \* Productivity and/or attendance problems
- \* Violence toward inanimate objects
- \* Steals or sabotages projects or equipment
- \* Lack of concern for the safety of others

#### **Personal Conduct to Minimize Violence**

Follow these suggestions in your daily interactions with people to de-escalate potentially violent situations. If at any time a person's behavior starts to escalate beyond your comfort zone, disengage.

##### **DO**

- \* Project calmness: move and speak slowly, quietly and confidently.
- \* Be an empathetic listener: encourage the person to talk and listen patiently.
- \* Focus your attention on the other person to let them know you are interested in what they have to say.
- \* Maintain a relaxed yet attentive posture and position yourself at a right angle rather than directly in front of the other person.
- \* Acknowledge the person's feelings. Indicate that you can see he/she is upset.
- \* Ask for small, specific favors such as asking the person to move to a quieter area.



- \* Establish ground rules if unreasonable behavior persists. Calmly describe the consequences of any violent behavior.
- \* Use delaying tactics which will give the person time to calm down. For example, offer a drink of water (in a disposable cup).
- \* Be reassuring and point out choices. Break big problems into smaller, more manageable problems.
- \* Accept criticism in a positive way. When a complaint might be true, use statements like, "You're probably right" or "It was my fault.." If the criticism seems unwarranted, ask clarifying questions.
- \* Ask for his/her recommendations. Repeat back to them what you feel they are requesting.
- \* Arrange yourself so that a visitor cannot block your access to an exit.
- \* Relinquish property if personal safety is at stake.

## **DO NOT**

- \* Use styles of communication which generate hostility such as apathy, brush off, coldness, condescension, robotism, going strictly by the rules or giving the run-around.
- \* Reject all of a client's demands from the start.
- \* Pose in challenging stances such as standing directly opposite someone, hands on hips or crossing your arms. Avoid any physical contact, finger pointing, or long periods of fixed eye contact.
- \* Make sudden movements which can be seen as threatening. Notice the tone, volume and rate of your speech.
- \* Challenge, threaten, or dare the individual. Never belittle the person or make him/her feel foolish.
- \* Criticize or act impatiently toward the agitated individual.
- \* Attempt to bargain with a threatening individual.
- \* Try to make the situation seem less serious than it is.
- \* Make false statements or promises you cannot keep.
- \* Try to impart a lot of technical or complicated information when emotions are high.
- \* Take sides or agree with distortions.
- \* Invade the individual's personal space. Make sure there is a space of 3' to 6' between you and the person.

## **Weapons in the Workplace**

Weapons in the workplace are dangerous emergency situations that are best left to professionally trained law enforcement personnel. However, if you find yourself trapped in a situation with no other options, you may choose to follow these suggestions until professional assistance arrives. If confronted, try to:

## **Stay Calm**

Keep in mind that an individual who threatens you with a weapon hasn't decided whether to use it or not. In many cases the person is terrified. If the person senses that you are losing control, it will most likely escalate the situation.

## **Avoid Rushing the Individual**

Unless you feel it is your only option, attempting to disarm a person with a weapon is extremely dangerous.

## **Focus on the Individual, Not on the Weapon**

When threatened, the weapon is often the only object of our attention. Try to remember that a gun, for example, presents absolutely no danger to anyone until someone decides to fire it. Focus on the person holding the weapon, not the weapon itself. Negotiate. This is not as complicated as it sounds. Try to get as many little "yeses" from the person threatening you as possible. Start with basic requests such as "Is it okay if I take a deep breath?" The more "yeses" you can get, the better chance you'll have that the person won't use the weapon.

## **Step Back**

Try to negotiate permission to take at least three steps away from the individual. If allowed, the increased distance reduces both the person's anxiety and the accuracy of the weapon if it is used.

## **Buy Time**

Time is an asset. The longer you can talk to the individual, the less likely they are to use the weapon.

## **Preparation for Appointments, Contacts, and Meetings**

Most state employees are in contact with the general public on a daily basis. However, preparation for audits, compliance visits, appointments, and other field visits by employees is very important. If you have not dealt with the person before or if the person is new or not well known, be particularly careful. The following information may help you prepare for field visits:

- \* Review appropriate files before you make any personal contact. Review all available documents. Letters from the person, case histories, reporting and payment records, and other documents in the file are all important sources of information. Be alert for information, which may indicate the person you are contacting may be difficult to deal with.

- \* Check with others in your agency who may have had previous contact with the person. Bring any concerns you may have about the person or business to the attention of your supervisor. If the person has behaved aggressively toward others, it may be determined that local law enforcement or other officials should be contacted to attempt to gain further information about the person.

- \* Plan your contact with the person or business and know the objectives of the contact. Establish your goals before the meeting. Prepare an outline of the questions

you will ask and the information needed. This will help you establish a positive and definitive posture during the meeting.

- \* When possible, make appointments by telephone first. Discuss the purpose of your visit by phone before contacting the individual in person. Pay special attention to the person's reaction to your phone call. Be alert for any uncooperative or unusual responses to your discussion and note any abusive language used. If the person becomes upset or verbally abusive during the telephone contact, try to defuse the situation over the phone. If you are unable to calm the person, arrange any meeting at a local state office or other public place.

- \* The location of the place of business or other site may place you in an undesirable situation. Do not go to remote locations, especially residences, alone. If it appears the meeting place may produce a one-on-one situation, one of the following options should be followed:

- Require the meeting take place in your office or at another public place.
- If the circumstances indicate it is absolutely necessary to visit the questionable site, schedule the visit so you can be accompanied by a co-worker or in a more drastic situation, request assistance from the local law enforcement agency.

- \* Always leave an itinerary with your co-workers listing the names, locations and telephone numbers of individuals or businesses you will be visiting. Maintain these itineraries for future reference.

- \* When in the field, regularly check-in with your office to update your itinerary and verify your well-being, especially before and after potentially or anticipated difficult contacts.

- \* Helena central office personnel may have the option of checking in and checking out with their local office in the area they are visiting. A copy of the itinerary can be left with the local office. The itinerary can be discussed with the local office staff who, in turn, can make field representatives and others aware of any potential problems or past problems with any person or business on the itinerary.

#### Field Safety Considerations

Even though you have thoroughly prepared for appointments or meetings using the steps listed earlier, you should also take additional safety and security considerations before and during the appointment.

- \* As encouraged earlier, do not meet with individuals or employers at their homes. For example, if an employer does business out of their residence or keeps their records at home, request the records be brought to your office or other public location. If you think it is absolutely unavoidable and it is absolutely necessary to meet with the individual at their home, check with your supervisor before going to the person's home.

- \* Consider taking a cellular phone with you. All state agencies have access to cellular phones or can make arrangements to use one for trips to the field. Have local emergency numbers handy in the event the area you are traveling in does not have 9-1-1 service.

- \* If circumstances make it necessary to visit a remote or undesirable site, drive by the site before making contact with the person. This is also a good practice to use if the individual is not well known or is new to the area. Look for things that could affect your

safety. Dogs or the number of vehicles at a residence could alert you to a potential danger.

- \* Do not ignore 'No Trespassing' signs or warning signs to public officials even if you have talked with the person by telephone and have an appointment. Return to the nearest public area and call the individual. Advise the person that they will have to bring the records and other documents to a local office or other public place for inspection or audit.

- \* Always park your vehicle in such a manner that you can leave the area quickly if necessary. If working in a rural area, park your car facing the road.

- \* Upon entering a business or residence, be alert to your surroundings. Look for exits, windows, and weapons. Be aware of any objects that individuals may have in their possession. While it may be somewhat normal to have a rifle, shotgun or other weapon in a residence, the presence of such weapons should be noted with care. A weapon in a business or elsewhere should be an immediate danger signal to you. Use common sense and trust your judgement about this type of potentially dangerous situation.

- \* Do not pet dogs or enter areas with unleashed dogs.

- \* While at a place of business or residence, find a suitable place to conduct the purpose of the visit. Avoid confined or restricted areas, which may trap you. Sit near an exit if possible. If the individual is uncooperative, try to gain their confidence by showing empathy or explaining the importance of the issue.

- \* When first meeting the individual in person, clearly state your name and identify yourself and your agency. If asked, show the person your identification or a letter of authorization. (State employee identification cards are available through the General Services Division of the Department of Administration.)

- \* Be courteous and always treat the person with respect. Explain the reason for your contact in a calm and professional manner. Observe the individual's initial reactions and body language. If the person exhibits a cooperative nature, move ahead with your purpose.

- \* Do not interview the person or employer in the presence of friends, customers, or other third parties. Always try to find a private place to conduct the interview.

- \* If at any time the interview is not reasonably friendly and businesslike, the audit, compliance check, or other process should be terminated and you should leave the place of business or other location immediately. The person can be contacted again later to make arrangements to finish the transaction in your office or another public location.

- \* Use discretion in accepting food or drinks during the course of your visit.

- \* Trust your judgement and intuition -- they are your best defenses.

- \* Treat all members of the public fairly, courteously, and respectfully.

- \* Listen carefully. Ask clarifying questions.

- \* Do not threaten, scold, or patronize.

- \* Recognize your own attitudes and eliminate those, which are counterproductive.

- \* Treat others, as you would like to be treated.

- \* Avoid getting trapped. Know where the exits are.

- \* Remember, potentially difficult site visits should include checking in with your office before and after the visit. Have a specified no later than check-in time for after the visit.

## **Travel Safety Considerations**

State employees who travel should consider the following safety tips condensed from a Uniquist Publications (Helena, Montana) book entitled Travel Safety: How to Travel Safely at Home and Abroad.

### **Vehicle Safety**

- \* Consider taking a cellular phone with you and have local emergency numbers handy.
- \* Know your destination and carry a map; plan your route to allow plenty of time to get there.
- \* Give your itinerary to a co-worker and your family.
- \* Time your road travel so you will be able to reach towns that will have gas stations open.
- \* Plan ahead to reach a comfortable and safe place before nightfall.
- \* Do not travel in congested areas with your windows open and doors unlocked.
- \* Avoid leaving your vehicle unattended for long periods and try to park in safe places. At night, park only in well lit areas near your destination.
- \* Before you get out of your vehicle, scan the immediate area for any loiterers and any other suspicious persons.
- \* Before entering a vehicle, check the front and back seat, and under the car, especially at night, to make sure no one is hiding inside or underneath it.
- \* When approaching your vehicle, if you see anything unusual (such as people loitering near your car,) keep a safe distance, turn around or walk past the car and seek help.
- \* Do not pick up hitchhikers.
- \* If you are a woman, consider wearing a baseball cap or place one in the window of the vehicle.
- \* If your vehicle breaks down on the road, pull as far as you can off to the side, turn on your emergency flashers, raise the hood, attach a white handkerchief or article of clothing to the antenna, get inside, lock the doors, and wait for help from a law enforcement officer. If a motorist stops, talk to them through a crack in the window and ask them to go for help.
- \* If you suspect that you're being followed, drive to a police or fire station, emergency room of a hospital, or stop at an open, well lit and preferably busy service station to call the police. If none of these measures are possible, blow your horn, turn on your hazard lights, and blink your lights.

### **Hotel/Motel Safety**

- \* Stay at reputable lodging facilities. Location in a good area of town is an important component of security.

- \* Hotel/motel guests are most vulnerable in places like parking lots, indoor garages, corridors, and elevators. Do not linger in these areas and be alert.
- \* When registering, sign your last name and first initial only. Do not use titles or degrees. This makes it more difficult for anyone to determine gender, marital, or professional status.
- \* Always keep your room number private.
- \* Familiarize yourself with the facility. Is there an all night desk clerk? Are the outside entrances locked at night? Is there a security staff? Where are the exits?
- \* Exterior windows are an important security consideration. Ground floor windows are easily reached and accessible to burglars as are windows near fire escapes and adjacent rooflines.
- \* Inspect your room to be certain that the door and window locks work, any door to an adjacent room is locked and that the phone works. If not, ask for another room.
- \* When absent from your room, make it seem occupied by leaving on a light or the TV.
- \* Do not open the door unless you know the identity or motive of the caller. If your room door has a peephole, use it. If there is no peephole, secure the chain lock, then open the door to verify identity.
- \* If someone knocks and says they are from the hotel staff, call the front desk to check before opening the door.

## **Threat Investigation Report**

Agency policy should require employees to report all threats or incidents of violent behavior by using the appropriate Incident Report Form. These report forms should be turned into the designated agency representative. This designated agency representative should take the steps necessary to complete a threat investigation report as quickly as possible, including private interviews of the victim(s) and witness(es). The report will be used by the Crisis Management Team to assess the safety of the workplace, and to decide upon a plan of action.

The following facts may be included in the threat investigation report:

- \* Name of the threat-maker and his/her relationship to the company and to the recipient
- \* Name(s) of the victims or potential victims
- \* When and where the incident occurred
- \* What happened immediately prior to the incident?
- \* The specific language of the threat
- \* Any physical conduct that would substantiate an intention to follow through on the threat
- \* How the threat-maker appeared (physically and emotionally)

- \* Names of others who were directly involved and any actions they took
  - \* How the incident ended
  - \* Names of witnesses
  - \* What happened to the threat-maker after the incident?
  - \* What happened to the other employees directly involved after the incident?
  - \* Names of any supervisory staff involved and how they responded
  - \* What event(s) triggered the incident?
  - \* Any history leading up to the incident
  - \* The steps, which have been taken to ensure that the threat will not be carried out
  - \* Suggestions for preventing workplace violence in the future
- The threat investigation report and any subsequent actions relating to the incident should be reported to General Services Division, Department of Administration.

## **Where to Get More Information**

A variety of resources are available for more information:

The Professional Development Center, State Personnel Division, PO Box 200127, Helena, Montana 59620-0127, (406) 444-3774. Contact Kathleen McNeill.

Training programs

List of contractors who give specialized preventing violence and self-defense workshops

Videos

Written material

Vocational Resources, Inc., 3011 Palmer, Missoula, MT 59802

Counseling, referral, and assessment services - 24 hotline - (800)-833-3031

Training and marketing programs - Becky Byrne - (406) 721-0291

Crisis needs - Denny Shaw - (406) 721-0291

Combating Workplace Violence: Guidelines for Employers and Law Enforcement.

International Association of Chiefs of Police, 515 N. Washington St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2357.

Playing It Safe: A Guide for Safety and Security of Montana State Employees. Available through the Professional Development Center. (406) 444-3774.